

Child Passenger Safety: What You Should Know—Forward-Facing

American Academy of Pediatrics Best Practice Recommendations for Transporting Children

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The American Academy of Pediatrics Guidelines:

- ◆ All children 2 years or older, or those who have outgrown the rear facing weight or height limit for their car safety seat, should use a forward facing car safety seat with a harness for as long as possible, up to the highest weight or height allowed by their car safety seat's manufacturer.
- ◆ **All children should be restrained in the rear seat of the vehicle.**



Forward-Facing Seat Best Practice

While all children and car seats are different, there are some basic guidelines to help make sure that a child is being transported in the safest possible way.

Keep a child in a forward-facing seat with a harness until:

- ◆ The child reaches the maximum forward-facing weight limit.
- ◆ The top of the child's ears reach the top of the car seat shell.
- ◆ The child's shoulders are above the top harness slot.

Forward-Facing Guidelines

The right car seat fits the child and the car, and will be used correctly every trip - every time. Not only will the child ride as safely as possible, a child who is secured during every ride will begin a lifelong habit of being secured in the vehicle every time the child travels.

- ◆ Select a car seat with an adjustable harness height to offer options for rapidly growing children.
- ◆ Many car seats are available with harnesses that accommodate children from 65 - 90 pounds.
- ◆ Avoid bulky clothing or padding behind the child.
- ◆ Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children (LATCH) is designed to install car seats in the vehicle using two lower anchors and one tether, in place of the seat belt.
- ◆ A tether can reduce the distance that the child's head moves forward in a crash by 4 to 6 inches, reducing the risk of head injuries in a crash.
- ◆ Do not exceed the maximum weight limit of the lower anchors provided by the car seat or vehicle manufacturer. If the vehicle manufacturer does not state a weight limit, do not use the lower anchors or the tether anchor if the child + the car seat combined weight is greater than 65 pounds.
- ◆ Unused seat belts may be within reach of a child when a car seat is installed with lower connectors. Reduce the risk of entanglement from unused seat belts by securing unused seat belts as directed by the vehicle manufacturer.

Tips to Achieve Correct Use of a Forward-Facing Car Seat



Selection

- Read the car seat instructions and/or label to make sure the car seat is appropriate for the child's age, weight and height.
- Be aware of height and weight limits as a child grows.
- Confirm that the child's ears are not above the top of the car seat shell.
- Seat the child in the car seat with their back and bottom in contact with the back of the car seat.



Correct Direction

- Attach the tether after securing with the seat belt or lower anchors, when forward-facing.



Seating Location

- Determine whether the seat belt or lower connectors will be used to secure the car seat.
- Choose a seating location with seat belts that can be locked or approved for LATCH, (Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children).
- Secure all children younger than 13 years in the back seat of vehicles for best protection.



Tight Installation

- Read and follow the car seat manufacturer's instructions to determine the appropriate upright or semi-upright angle when installing the car seat in the forward-facing position.
- Thread and tighten the seat belt or lower connectors through the correct forward-facing belt path.
- Secure the tether with the seat belt or lower anchors, whenever possible.
- Confirm the car seat does NOT move side-to-side or front-to-back more than 1-inch when tested at the belt path.



Snug Harness

- Place the harness through the correct reinforced harness slots at or above the shoulder following the car seat manufacturer's instructions.
- Secure the child with a snug harness. A snug harness does not permit excess webbing to be pinched at the shoulder or hips once the harness is buckled.
- Place the harness retainer clip at armpit level.

Harness Slots:

Select and use the reinforced harness slots that are at or above the child's shoulder, following the car seat manufacturer's instructions.

Harness Retainer Clip:

Positioned at armpit or mid-chest level.



Snug Harness:

A snug harness does not allow the harness webbing to be folded between your thumb and forefinger when pinched at the shoulder.



Forward-Facing



When children outgrow the rear-facing car seat, secure them in a forward-facing child safety seat with a harness for as long as possible, up to the highest weight or height allowed by the manufacturer of the car seat. All children younger than age 13 should ride in a back seat.

Here's What to Do:

- ◆ Use a forward-facing car seat with a harness as long as possible up to the upper weight or height limits for the harness.
- ◆ Secure the car seat with the seat belt or LATCH system in the back seat.
- ◆ Use the tether when securing a forward-facing car seat.



Forward-Facing

Forward-Facing car seats reduce the risk of injury for children by 71% compared to children using the seat belt only.

Forward-Facing Checklist:

- Child's ears should not be above the top of the shell of the car seat.
- Harness straps are positioned **at or above the shoulder**.
- Harness straps lay flat and fit snugly on the child with the harness retainer clip at armpit level.
- Seat belt or lower anchors in the correct belt path are locked and tight with less than one inch of side-to-side movement when pulled at the belt path.
- Tether should be used following the manufacturer's instructions.
- Read and follow the car seat manufacturer's instructions to determine the appropriate upright or semi-upright angle when installing the car seat in the forward-facing position.

Here's Why:

- ◆ The car seat harness:
 - Spreads the crash forces over the strong parts of the child's body.
 - Holds the child in the car and keeps the body positioned in a crash.
- ◆ The tether limits head injuries by reducing movement in a crash.

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Right Seat + Right Time + Right Use = Reducing Car Crash Injury.

Forward-Facing: Position the Shoulder Harness At or Above Child's Shoulders

*When a child is forward-facing the harness straps should be coming out of a slot **AT or ABOVE** shoulder level.*

The correct position of the shoulder harness is **at or above** your child's shoulders. Correct shoulder harness height is critical to optimally securing the child and reducing the child's movement in the event of a sudden stop or impact.

Harness Positioning For Forward-Facing

In a frontal collision, a child will move forward with sudden force against the shoulder harness. The correct positioning of the shoulder harness, at or above the child's shoulders when forward-facing (see illustration to the right), most effectively decrease the distance the child will travel when propelled forward in a crash. The proper positioning of the harness reduces the amount of forward movement resulting in the child experiencing less violent forces.



Selecting the Correct Harness Slot

Read the car seat instructions to learn how to adjust the harness height for the child. On many car seats, harness height is adjusted by threading the webbing through slots at different heights on the back of the car seat. Some car seats have a no-rethread harness that adjust the harness height by pulling on levers, pushing buttons, or turning knobs to raise and lower the harness.



Rethread Harness



No-Rethread Harness



Convertible car seats with a rethread harness may require the use of the top slots or allow only certain slots be used for forward-facing. Use only the reinforced harness slots permitted in the instructions to keep the harness secure in a crash. All harness slots are reinforced on combination car seats and forward-facing-only car seats. Use the harness slots that are closest to the child and located at or above the child's shoulders.

Correct Installation

The harness straps are anchored snugly at or above a forward-facing child's shoulders, and better restrain the child from moving forward.